

Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend the claims as indicated below. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for a first class mail piece tracking provider to provide, to a plurality of customers of the first class mail piece tracking provider, tracking of individual outbound first class mail pieces respectively initiated in a mail stream by respective customers of the plurality of customers, said method implemented using a computer-based postage system programmed for operation on behalf of the first class mail piece tracking provider, said computer-based postage system available for communication with each respective customer of the plurality of customers, said method comprising the computer-based postage system programmed for:

using the computer-based postage system for recording a plurality of mailing tracking subscriber identifiers assigned by a postal authority to the first class mail piece tracking provider, the plurality of mailing tracking subscriber identifiers corresponding to an authorization by the postal authority to the first class mail piece tracking provider to create machine-readable tracking graphic symbolgies, separate from postage indicia, for tracking first class mailings that bear machine-readable tracking barcodes graphic symbolgies created in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority to the first class mail piece tracking provider for tracking first class mailings;

using the computer-based postage system for receiving, from a particular customer of the plurality of customers of the first class mail piece tracking provider, a request for postage indicia to mail a particular first class mail piece to a delivery address, wherein the request from the particular customer to mail the particular first class mail piece comprises an indication by the particular customer to provide tracking of the particular first class mail piece;

using the computer-based postage system for determining a delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address;

using the computer-based postage system for identifying from the plurality of mailing tracking subscriber identifiers, a next available mailing tracking subscriber identifier;

using the computer-based postage system for identifying a next available mailing identifier;

using the computer-based postage system for modifying at least one of the next available mailing tracking subscriber identifier and the next available mailing identifier, until determining a combination of a destination tracking service type, the next available mailing tracking subscriber identifier, the next available mailing identifier, and the delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address, to comprise a first class mail piece tracking identifier that would trackably identify the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority to the first class mail piece tracking provider for tracking first class mailings;

using the computer-based postage system for assigning the first class mail piece tracking identifier to the particular first class mail piece, wherein the first class mail piece tracking identifier trackably identifies the particular first class mail piece during the particular period of time;

using the computer-based postage system for creating a machine-readable tracking graphic symbology, separate from postage indicia, comprising the first class mail piece tracking identifier; and

using the computer-based postage system for relating the first class mail piece tracking identifier to the particular customer of the plurality of customers.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, said method further comprising:

using the computer-based postage system for facilitating encoding the first class mail piece tracking identifier as a graphic symbology adapted for fixing the

machine-readable tracking graphic symbology in a visual medium, said visual medium adapted for physical association with the particular first class mail piece.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 2, said method further comprising:

physically associating the machine-readable tracking graphic symbology fixed in the visual medium with the particular first class mail piece.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 2, said method further comprising:

using the computer-based postage system for accessing a plurality of electronic mail piece tracking identifier representations presented by the postal authority, each electronic mail piece tracking identifier representation of the plurality of electronic mail piece tracking identifier representations corresponding to one scanned first class mail piece tracking identifier of a plurality of scanned first class mail piece tracking identifiers produced in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority to the first class mail piece tracking provider for tracking first class mailings;

using the computer-based postage system for receiving from the particular user, a request for tracking information regarding the particular first class mail piece;

using the computer-based postage system for searching the plurality of electronic mail piece tracking identifier representations for an electronic mail piece tracking identifier that matches the first class mail piece tracking identifier that trackably identifies the particular first class mail piece;

for an electronic mail piece tracking identifier that matches the first class mail piece tracking identifier that trackably identifies the particular first class mail piece, using the computer-based postage system for reporting to the particular user, tracking information associated with the electronic mail piece tracking identifier; and

for an electronic mail piece tracking identifier for which no match is found, using the computer-based postage system for reporting to the particular user an indication that there is no tracking information available for the particular first class mail piece.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1 wherein the first class mail piece tracking identifier further comprises:

a service type.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 5 wherein the delivery address identifier is obtained from Internet-based postage delivery address information.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, the method further comprising:

~~encoding the first class mail piece tracking identifier as a machine-readable bar code; and~~

using the computer-based postage system for formatting the machine-readable tracking graphic symbology as a bar code, for print rendering as a label for the particular first class mail piece.

8. (Currently Amended) A computer program product, comprising a computer-readable medium having a computer-readable program code embodied therein, said computer-readable program code adapted to be executed to implement a method for printably rendering a trackable mail piece identifier graphic symbology, said method comprising:

encoding a destination tracking service type;

encoding a mailing subscriber identifier corresponding to a mailing subscriber identifier of a plurality of mailing subscriber identifiers assigned by a postal authority to a first class mail piece tracking provider, wherein each mailing subscriber identifier of the plurality of mailing subscriber identifiers corresponds

to an authorization to the first class mail piece tracking provider by the postal authority for creating machine-readable tracking barcodes, separate from postage indicia, for tracking first class mailings that bear machine-readable tracking barcodes created in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority to the first class mail piece tracking provider ~~for tracking first class mailings;~~

encoding a mailing identifier as an encoded mailing identifier, the encoded mailing identifier comprising an encoding of a mailing identifier corresponding to a particular customer user of a plurality of customer users of the first class mail piece tracking provider;

encoding a delivery address identifier corresponding to a delivery address to which the particular customer user has requested destination tracking of a particular first class mail piece, ~~wherein~~;

creating a first class mail piece tracking identifier comprising a combination of the encoded destination tracking service type, the encoded mailing subscriber identifier, the encoded mailing identifier, and the encoded delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address, comprises a the first class mail piece tracking identifier that trackably identifies the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority to the first class mail piece tracking provider for tracking first class mailings and that is associated with the particular customer user; and

formatting for print-rendering, a machine-readable tracking barcode, exclusive of postage indicia, the machine-readable tracking barcode comprising the first class mail piece tracking identifier.

9. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of Claim 8, said method further comprising:

before formatting the machine-readable tracking barcode:

encoding as an encoded service type identifier, a service type identifier; and, wherein the delivery address identifier is trackably unique

during a particular period of time, within a combination of the encoded service type identifier, the encoded mailing subscriber identifier and the encoded mailing identifier; and

creating the first class mail piece tracking identifier comprising a combination of the encoded destination tracking service type, the encoded mailing subscriber identifier, the encoded mailing identifier, the encoded delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address, and the encoded service type identifier.

10. (Currently Amended) A method of encoding a trackable first class mail piece identifier as a graphic symbology, said method comprising:

receiving a request by a particular customer user of a plurality of customer users of a computer-based postage provider to print computer-based postage for a particular first class mail piece for mailing the particular first class mail piece to a particular delivery address, wherein the request to print computer-based postage comprises an indication by the particular customer user to track the particular first class mail piece;

assigning a tracking identifier to correspond to the particular customer user and to trackably correspond to the particular first class mail piece, wherein the tracking identifier trackably identifies the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time, wherein the tracking identifier comprises a mailing subscriber identifier corresponding to an authorization to the computer-based postage provider by a postal authority for the computer-based postage provider to create machine-readable first class mailing tracking graphic symbologies, separate from postage indicia, for tracking first class mailings, in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority, the tracking identifier further comprising a mailing identifier, and a delivery address identifier, wherein the delivery address identifier is trackably unique within a combination of the mailing subscriber identifier and the mailing identifier during a period of time, and wherein the mailing subscriber identifier corresponds to an authorization by the

~~postal authority for tracking first class mailings by the computer-based postage provider;~~

encoding the tracking identifier as a machine-readable graphic symbology, separate from computer-based postage indicia, in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority, said machine-readable graphic symbology adapted for fixing in a visual medium that is adapted for physical association with the particular first class mail piece; and

saving in a memory storage a relationship between the tracking identifier and the particular customer user.

Claim 11. (Cancelled).

12. (Previously Presented) The method of encoding a unique mail piece identifier as a graphic symbology of Claim 10, wherein encoding the tracking identifier as a graphic symbology comprises encoding the tracking identifier as a machine-readable bar code.

13. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for tracking individual outbound first class mail pieces, said method implemented using a computer-based postage system, said method comprising:

using the computer-based postage system for receiving a postage printing request from a particular customer user of a plurality of customer users using a computer-based postage provider, said postage printing request comprising a request for computer-based postage indicia for mailing a particular first class mail piece to a delivery address, wherein the request from the particular user for computer-based postage indicia for mailing to mail the particular first class mail piece further compris[[es]]ing an indication by the particular user to provide tracking of the particular first class mail piece;

using the computer-based postage system for determining a delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address;

using the computer-based postage system for formulating a next available first class mail piece identifier that would trackably identify the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time, said first class mail piece identifier comprising a trackable combination of:

a destination tracking service type,

a next available mailing subscriber identifier corresponding to an authorization to the computer-based postage provider by a governmental postal authority for the computer-based postage provider to generate for customer users of the computer-based postage provider, machine-readable, graphic symbologies, apart from computer-based postage indicia, representing tracking identifiers for first class mail pieces,

a next available mailing identifier, and

the delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address;

using the computer-based postage system for encoding the next available first class mail piece identifier as a machine-readable graphic symbology; and

using the computer-based postage system for storing in a computer-accessible memory, an association between the particular customer user and the next available first class mail piece identifier.

Claim 14. (Cancelled).

15. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 13 wherein the machine-readable graphic symbology comprises a one-dimensional bar-code.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 13, said method further comprising:

using the computer-based postage system for responding to an indication by the particular customer user to print the machine readable graphic symbology by transmitting for printing the machine- readable graphic symbology.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 16, said method further comprising:

using the computer-based postage system for generating for printing, computer-based postage indicia in accordance with the postage printing request.

18. (Currently Amended) A method using a computer-based postage system for printing a trackable first class mail piece identifier for a first class mail piece, said method comprising:

using the computer-based postage system for generating for printing on a remote printer in communication with a remote client computer, computer-based postage indicia for a particular first class mail piece in accordance with a postage printing request by a particular customer user of a plurality of customer users of the computer-based postage system, wherein the postage printing request comprises a delivery address;

using the computer-based postage system for generating a first class mail piece tracking identifier for the particular first class mail piece, wherein the first class mail piece tracking identifier comprises:

a mailing subscriber identifier corresponding to an authorization by a governmental postal authority to a computer-based postage provider associated with the computer-based postage system, to create for customer users of the computer-based postage system, machine-readable, graphic symbologies for tracking first class mail pieces,

a mailing identifier, and

a delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address, wherein the delivery address is trackably unique within a combination of the mailing subscriber identifier and the mailing identifier during a particular period of time;

using the computer-based postage system for encoding the first class mail piece tracking identifier as a machine-readable barcode apart from computer-based postage indicia for the particular first class mail piece;

using the computer-based postage system for storing in a computer-accessible memory, a set of information relating the first class mail piece tracking identifier to the particular customer user; and

using the computer-based postage system for generating for printing, a printable format of the machine-readable barcode.

Claims 19-20. Cancelled.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 18, wherein the computer-based postage indicia is formatted for printing on a first label and wherein the first class mail piece tracking identifier is formatted for printing on a second label.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 18, wherein the computer-based postage indicia and the first class mail piece tracking identifier are formatted for printing on an envelope.

23. (Currently Amended) A method for retrieving a trackable first class mail piece identifier using a computer-based postage system, said method comprising:

using the computer-based postage system for retrieving, from a plurality of electronic first class mail piece identifier representations presented by a governmental postal authority, an electronic first class mail piece identifier representation, separate from postage indicia, said electronic first class mail piece identifier representation corresponding to a scanned machine-readable barcode that matches a particular first class mail piece identifier that trackably identifies a particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time and that corresponds to a particular customer user of a plurality of customer users of the computer-based postage system, said particular first class mail piece identifier generated by the computer-based postage system according to an authorization by the governmental postal authority to a computer-based postage provider associated with the computer-based postage system, to create for

customer users of the computer-based postage system, separate from computer-based postage indicia, machine-readable, barcodes for tracking first class mail pieces; and

using the computer-based postage system for reporting to a display device in communication with a client computer corresponding to the particular customer user, a set of tracking information associated with the electronic first class mail piece identifier representation.

24. (Currently Amended) A method for tracking individual outbound first class mail pieces using a computer-based postage system, said method comprising:

using the computer-based postage system for assigning a composite confirm identifier to a particular first class mail piece according to input by a particular mailer of a plurality of mailers that are customers of the computer-based postage system, wherein said composite confirm identifier trackably identifies the particular mail piece during a particular period of time and wherein the composite confirm identifier is assigned according to an authorization by a postal authority to a computer-based postage provider associated with the computer-based postage system, to create for mailers that are customers of the computer-based postage system, machine-readable, barcodes for tracking first class mail pieces;

using the computer-based postage system for relating the composite confirm identifier for the particular first class mail piece to the particular mailer;

using the computer-based postage system for encoding the composite confirm identifier as a machine-readable barcode, separate from postage indicia, according to the authorization by the postal authority;

using the computer-based postage system for receiving a scanning event about the composite confirm identifier scanned by the postal authority; and

using the computer-based postage system for reporting the scanning event to the particular mailer.

25. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein the modifying process comprises:

using the computer-based postage system for testing a first combination of a destination tracking service type, the next available mailing tracking subscriber identifier, the next available mailing identifier, and the delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address, to determine whether the first combination would trackably identify the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time;

for a first combination that would not trackably identify the particular first class mail piece during the particular period of time, using the computer-based postage system for repeating the following steps until a combination is determined that would trackably identify the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time:

incrementing the next available mailing identifier until a maximum mailing identifier is exceeded or until the combination of the destination tracking service type, the next available mailing tracking subscriber identifier, the next available mailing identifier, and the delivery address identifier, would trackably identify the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time, whichever occurs first;

if the maximum mailing identifier is exceeded before the combination would trackably identify the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time, then:

selecting from the plurality of mailing subscriber identifiers a further next available mailing tracking subscriber identifier;

determining a next available mailing identifier; and

testing a further combination of a destination tracking service type, the further next available mailing tracking subscriber identifier, the next available mailing identifier, and the delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address, to determine whether the further combination would trackably identify the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time.

26. (Currently Amended) The method of encoding a unique mail piece identifier as a graphic symbology of Claim 10, said method further comprising:
- accessing a plurality of electronic mail piece representations presented by the postal authority, each electronic mail piece representation of the plurality of electronic mail piece representations corresponding to a machine sensing of a machine-readable graphic symbology created in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority, and each electronic mail piece representation comprising an indication of a corresponding tracking identifier and a corresponding set of information regarding a status of a respective first class mail piece in a mail stream processed by the postal authority;
 - saving in a computer-accessible memory, each electronic mail piece representation with the corresponding tracking identifier and the corresponding set of information regarding the status of the respective first class mail piece;
 - searching the computer-accessible memory for a stored tracking identifier that matches the tracking identifier that trackably corresponds to the particular first class mail piece;
 - for a match between a stored tracking identifier and the tracking identifier that trackably corresponds to the particular first class mail piece, reporting to the particular customer user, at least a portion of the corresponding set of information regarding the status of the particular first class mail piece; and
 - for a tracking identifier for which no match is found, indicating to the particular customer user that tracking status information was not found for the particular first class mail piece.